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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 70/NO. 3 JANUARY 23, 2006

INSIDE

UK, Sweden events take up Africa, anti-imperialist struggle

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Unionize the mines!

Workers respond to W. Virginia mine disaster



Militant/Brian Williams

Coal miner Jimmy Burgoyne (right), a UMWA Local 1501 member, speaks to *Militant* reporter Marty Ressler January 6 at Consolidated Coal's Robinson Run mine near Shinnston, West Virginia. It's the nearest unionized mine to the nonunion one in Sago, where 12 died underground after a January 2 blast. A union mine "is safer," he said.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS AND MARTY RESSLER

SAGO, West Virginia—The death of 12 people after an explosion in the nonunion Sago Mine here January 2 has sparked discussion among working people in the coal mining communities of this state about company violations of safety, the culpability of the International Coal Group (ICG)—the mine's owner—for the deaths, and the need to unionize the mines. On January 10 another coal miner was killed in Pike County, Kentucky, when a section of the roof collapsed at Maverick Mining Co.

Jimmy Burgoyne, 24, is a general inside laborer and member of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1501 at the Consolidated Coal Robinson Run mine—the nearest union mine to Sago. He previously worked at the ICG-owned Sycamore #1 mine. "Some old guys who have worked only at Robinson Run think the mine is unsafe. I have worked at both union and nonunion mines," he said January 6. "I think it is safer here. A union mine tends to follow the guidelines better."

Among those killed at Sago were 11 workers and a mine section foreman. One survivor, 26-year-old Randal McCloy Jr., who was trapped with his co-workers after the blast, remains hospitalized in critical condition.

Notes left by one miner, Jim Bennett, 61, a shuttle car operator with 25 years of mining experience, indicates that he and others huddled in a section of the mine behind a plastic curtain they erected to keep out high levels of carbon monoxide were alive at least 10 hours after the explosion.

The company waited two hours before informing the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) of the blast, delaying the assembling of a rescue team. The first crew arrived seven hours after the blast but couldn't enter the mine until a backup crew arrived four hours later. It took nearly 42 hours after the explosion for the men

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U.S. rulers seek support for domestic police spying

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Since the public disclosure in mid-December of a domestic spying program at home, the White House has been waging an offensive to win public support for the operation by the National Security Agency (NSA).

U.S. officials insist the president has the executive authority to order the NSA to tap phone calls and e-mails between people in the United States and other countries without a warrant from a specially designated court. They argue this is a "wartime measure" to conduct "surveillance as-

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Join 'Militant' sub renewal campaign!

Letter from the editor

Dear Reader,

If your subscription has just expired or is about to run out we urge you to renew. We also invite you to join a five-week campaign, beginning January 16, to increase the *Militant's* long-term readership. The effort builds on the success of last fall's sub drive when 3,200 people signed up—double the original projection. Most of the new readers were working people resisting the employers' attacks on wages and working conditions, as well as youth attracted to these struggles of the working class.

Hundreds of these subscriptions are about to run out now.

The kick-off of the sub renewal cam-

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U.S. gov't boosts oil exploitation, military presence in West Africa

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Within a decade 25 percent of U.S. oil imports will come from West Africa's Gulf of Guinea, according to projections by the Department of Energy and the CIA. This growing exploitation of African oil is bringing with it an increased U.S. military presence in the region.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development estimates Africa's total oil reserves as 80 billion barrels, or eight percent of the world's crude reserves. With output of more than 4 million barrels a day, sub-Saharan Africa already produces as much as Iran, Venezuela, and

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'Stand strong in defense of labor rights'

Campaign to defeat retaliatory suit by Utah coal boss gains support

BY PAUL MAILHOT

SALT LAKE CITY—"I commend your efforts to stand strong against the C.W. Mining Company's attack on labor rights," says a recent letter to the Militant Fighting Fund from James Lowthers, president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400. "All too often large businesses attempt to intimidate working men and women, and through solidarity and perseverance we must let this company know that its actions will not be tolerated."

The local, which represents meat packers and grocery workers in several mid-Atlantic states, asked to have its name added to the Militant Fighting Fund endorser list and "be included with those groups standing

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California: striking laundry workers press fight for livable wages, pensions

BY SETH DELLINGER

COLTON, California—Chanting and banging on metal tins, laundry workers on strike here marched around the Angelica laundry plant during an expanded "family day" picket line on January 8. The more than 300 members of the UNITE HERE union employed at the plant have maintained a round-the-clock picket line since December 18, when they rejected the company's "final offer" and walked off the job to demand better wages and retirement benefits.

"My grandma has been working here for 26 years, but if I got a part-time job I'd probably be making more money

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Also Inside:

Using new emergency powers, Australian cops harass Aborigines

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—"This rally wants to show that people are fed up with this racist violence," said Osmond Chiu, the Anti-Racism Officer of the National Union of Students (NUS). The NUS called a "United Against Racism" rally here December 18, where thousands protested the racist attacks a week earlier against youth of Arab descent at Cronulla beach in southern Sydney.

The weekend of December 17–18 police used emergency powers to lock down beaches in the Sydney region. Some 800 cops from around New South Wales (NSW) were brought in for a total of 2,000 police officers deployed. City beaches were largely empty except for locals. Police Commissioner Ken Moroney denied that the roadblocks had achieved what rioters in Cronulla had sought—stopping people from working-class suburbs visiting the beach.

New laws giving police increased emergency powers were passed December 15 by the state parliament. On January 1 cops used these powers to lock down an Aboriginal housing estate in Dubbo in central west NSW. Early that morning, when two cops stopped a car to arrest the driver, a group of up to 100 Aboriginal youths surrounded them. Both the cop car and the other vehicle were torched. About 60 cops enforced a roadblock around the estate that night. "Last night we sent a clear message to the local community" about what "will not be tolerated in the area," said a Dubbo Detective Inspector.

Ten people were arrested including six who were charged with riot and affray and refused bail.

During the week following the attacks at Cronulla, police arrested 162 people in Sydney. Two teenagers accused of being involved in a racist bashing on a train at Cronulla station were granted conditional bail. The same magistrate denied bail to a Lebanese youth who was accused of burning an Australian flag at a Returned Services League Club.



March in Sydney Dec. 18, 2005, to protest racist attacks on people of Arab descent.

On December 21 bail granted two days earlier to Parham Esmailpour was revoked. Esmailpour had attended the "United against racism" rally. The media said he was arrested December 18 with "anti-government literature" on him and a "bottle of petrol."

A heavy police presence remains on many beaches. A low-key festival to "celebrate multiculturalism" at Cronulla beach December 25 was attended by a small group of people. About 10 racists gathered near the group. The cops moved in and those taking part in the festival moved to another spot. Rani Barghouthi, who took part in the festival, said he wanted to show that the beach belonged to everyone.

Meanwhile, cops have continued to harass youth in working-class suburbs with large Middle Eastern populations. Rihab Charida, a welfare worker of Palestinian parentage who was at Cronulla December 25, said, "I see on a daily basis police stopping young guys because they look Arab."

"Racism is a tool of the employing class and is used to divide working Australians," the Sydney Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia said in a December 12 statement condemning the racist violence at Cronulla. "The unity of all Australian workers is absolutely vital at a time when working people are under severe attack."

Somalis in Ohio protest killing by cops of mentally ill man

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

About 100 people, several carrying signs that read "Nasir Abdi needed medication, not a bullet," demonstrated December 30 outside the city hall building in Columbus, Ohio. The protest took place after Abdi, a 23-year-old Somali man who suffered from mental illness, was shot and killed by Columbus cops two days earlier.

According to police reports, Abdi allegedly threatened four police officers with a kitchen knife. The cops said they were attempting to arrest him and bring him to a local psychiatric center. Witnesses to the shooting said Adbi had no knife.

According to the Associated Press, neighborhood residents who gathered shortly after Abdi's killing confronted the police, screaming "Cold-blooded killers!" More cops arrived to break up the protest.

Columbus police officials have sought to rationalize the killing by saying that the cops involved lacked "training in dealing with mentally ill suspects."

Maryam Warsame, who joined the December 30 demonstration, told reporters: "Is it because of their color? Is it because of their language? Is it because of what? Why did he have to lose his life? This man needed help."

Chad: army fires on student protests

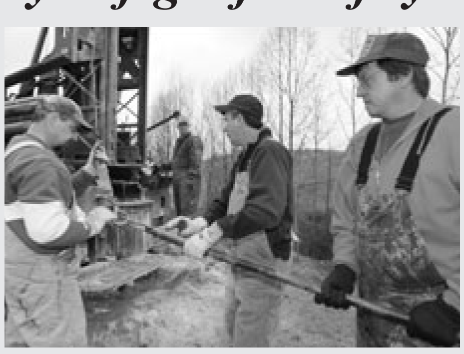
BY BRIAN TAYLOR

Students in Pala, Chad—a central African nation of 9.5 million people—organized a demonstration December 8 to support teachers planning a strike after not being paid for three months.

The students were met with gunfire from government troops.

State radio initially reported two killed. The next day, however, government officials said no one was killed. From eight to 17 individuals were injured, according to media reports.

Two similar protests took place earlier in Abeche and Bongor. Riot cops flown in by helicopter from N'Djamena quelled the latter with force.


Workers drill on a hillside in Tallmansville, West Virginia, January 3 in effort to rescue coal miners trapped in the Sago Mine.

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NATO to assume command in southern Afghanistan

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

Troops of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are now scheduled to assume command of military operations in southern Afghanistan by May, expanding NATO's role in the country's occupation from the north and the west, where the Atlantic imperialist military alliance has 10,000 soldiers already deployed.

The move will free up the U.S. military, which has 19,000 troops in the country, to concentrate more firepower along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, where it has been engaging units of the Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan until the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, and al-Qaeda fighters.

British, Canadian, Romanian, and other governments will supply up to 6,000 additional troops for the NATO force in southern Afghanistan. The Australian government, which is not a NATO member, has also agreed to send troops.

The Dutch government is coming under pressure from NATO and U.S. officials to go ahead with its decision, which is facing some opposition in the Netherlands, to send 1,400 troops to southern Afghanistan. "This is an extremely important mission," said NATO secretary general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, also a former Dutch foreign minister, January 9, reported the Associated Press. "We should not grant the terrorists, the Taliban, a victory." Paul Bremer, a former U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands and one-time U.S. governor of Iraq, added, "If the Dutch decide not to send troops to Afghanistan, that will be damaging to Dutch interests in the United States."

Col. S.J. Bowes said troops from his country, Canada, will take over in Kandahar, and British forces will command the overall NATO mission in the south. "It's clear that this is not a peacekeeping mission," he told the Associated Press.

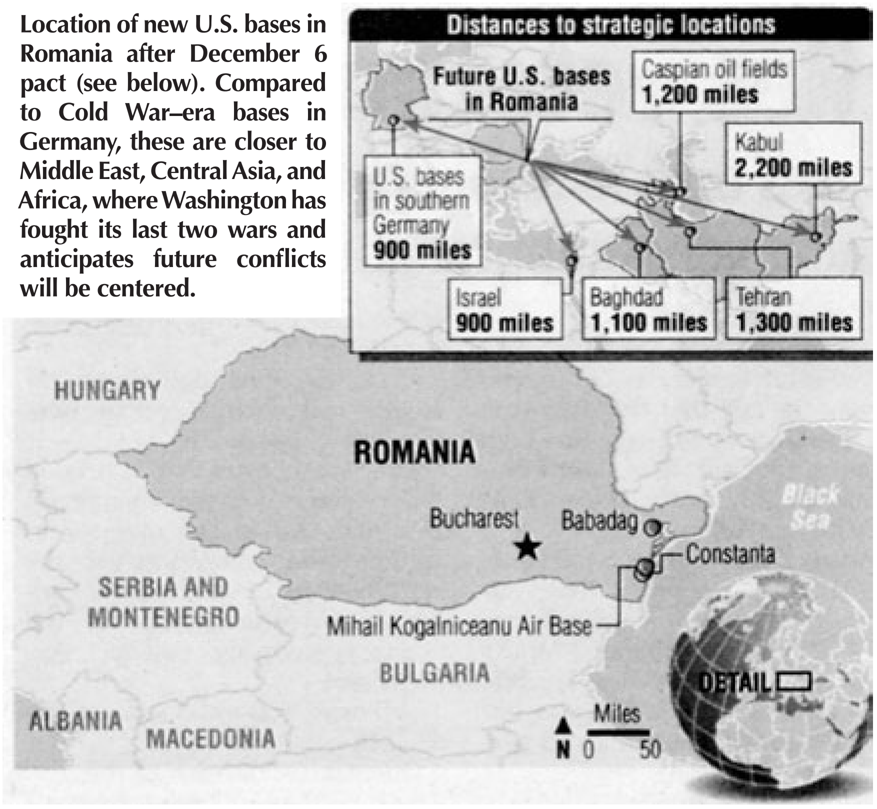
Bombings by pro-Taliban forces and their allies and U.S.-led attacks have resulted in more civilian deaths last year—about 1,500 total—than any year since the U.S. invasion in 2001. And nearly half of the 200 U.S. soldiers killed in the country since the invasion died in fighting last year.

Meanwhile, U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld has announced that the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan will be cut to 16,500 by this spring as European governments commit more forces. U.S. president George Bush, speaking at the Pentagon January 4, referred to Afghanistan as one of "two major fronts in the war on terror," the other being Iraq. In a speech the next day, Bush also noted that U.S. commanders in Iraq "have recently determined that we can reduce combat forces in Iraq from 17 to 15 brigades."

Washington has spent well over $47 billion since 2001 in its efforts to establish a relatively stable, pliant regime in Afghanistan and root out Taliban and al-Qaeda forces there. On January 7 an air strike on a Muslim cleric's home in North Waziristan, Pakistan, killed eight Pakistanis and wounded nine others. Residents reportedly said that U.S. helicopters launched the attack, landed, seized five people, and flew toward Afghanistan.

U.S. bases in Europe to move southeast

Location of new U.S. bases in Romania after December 6 pact (see below). Compared to Cold War–era bases in Germany, these are closer to Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa, where Washington has fought its last two wars and anticipates future conflicts will be centered.



On December 6, U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice signed a new agreement with the government of Romania allowing Washington to use two bases: the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base on the Black Sea and the Babadag training range farther north. The map above shows their advantage over the former Cold War–era bases in Central Europe for positioning U.S. occupation troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas of interest to U.S. imperialism. U.S. troops will be rotated quickly in and out of the Romanian bases, "alleviating the need for extensive base housing, movie theaters, PXs and car washes associated with more conventional bases in Germany," the *Army Times* reported. A similar pact with the government of Bulgaria is expected in March.

Africa: U.S. expands oil exploitation, military presence

Continued from front page

Mexico combined. The region's output has increased 36 percent in 10 years, compared with 16 percent for the rest of the world. The Gulf of Guinea, with estimated reserves of 24 billion barrels, is likely to become the world's leading deep water offshore production center.

Equatorial Guinea currently holds the record, along with Angola, for issuance of oil prospecting permits. Over the next 20 years it could become Africa's third-largest oil producer, with 740,000 barrels a day. A dozen facilities for production, storage, and offshore loading of liquefied natural gas are being built across West Africa, including on Equatorial Guinea's main island of Bioko, noted a December 28 "National Security Analysis" carried by the Newhouse News Service.

Africa's largest oil producer, Nigeria, is 11th in the world and the fifth-largest supplier to companies in the United States. According to a CIA report, Nigeria plans to increase daily production from 2.6 million barrels in 2005 to 3 million barrels in 2006, reaching 4 millions barrels by 2010.

Washington has scrambled to displace its imperialist rivals in the region to tap into its rich oil reserves, the bulk of which can be shipped rapidly and relatively securely to U.S. ports.

The growing reliance on African oil would seem to "scream out for a robust Navy presence, including warships, coastal patrol boats and maritime aircraft surveillance," said the Newhouse News report.

But Washington is instead fashioning a military approach more in line with its "war on terrorism," focused on lightly armored, fast moving elite forces. Washington has negotiated the rights to establish a military base patterned along these lines in São Tomé and Príncipe, an island nation in the Gulf of Guinea.

"We can't afford to have a ship there 365 days a year," said Rear Adm. D.C. Curtis. "The days of getting an aircraft carrier off the coast are gone." The size of the U.S. Naval fleet is below 300, its lowest number since 1916. Curtis heads the U.S. 6th Fleet, which oversees naval responsibilities in Europe and Africa from its headquarters in Italy.

To secure its interests on the continent the U.S. government will spend $500 million over the next five years training African armies. Last June 700 U.S. Special Forces troops and 2,100 troops from Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria, and Tunisia joined 3,000 troops from Saharan countries in "Exercise Flintlock '05," ostensibly to improve border security.

—*MILITANT LABOR FORUMS*—

IOWA

Des Moines

Bosses' Profit Drive Killed W. Virginia Coal Miners. Speaker: Kevin Dwire, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 20. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 3707 Douglas Ave. (515) 255-1707.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

U.S. Miners Killed by Bosses' Profit Drive. Sat., Jan. 21, 5:00 p.m. 287 Selwyn St. Spreydon. Tel: (03) 365-6055

Maori university wins claim against New Zealand gov't

BY JANET ROTH

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The Waitangi Tribunal, a body set up to hear Maori claims for stolen land and other rights, has condemned the government for its attempts to control and downsize Te Wananga o Aotearoa (TWOA). The wananga is a Maori-based educational institution providing courses for adults.

On December 22 the tribunal released its ruling in favor of a claim by TWOA's parent body, which said the government had undermined Maori authority through exerting "immense and unrelenting" pressure on the institution.

In February 2005 the government appointed a manager to take over the wananga's finances, withheld a $20 million loan, and forced members of TWOA's governing council to resign—leaving government appointees in a majority of that body.

In a related barrage the media alleged misappropriation of government funds. In the firing line was TWOA's chief executive, Rongo Wetere, whom the government called upon to resign. The auditor-general's office began investigations and the wananga's council suspended Wetere in October.

Releasing the auditor-general's report on December 5, Wetere said it found "no fraud, no corruption, and no nepotism." Ignoring these findings, the government said the audit found some poor management practices and continued targeting Wetere. On December 15, Wetere announced his retirement.

The government pressure is aimed at imposing a charter on TWOA, which would restrict its courses to those with Maori cultural content or specifically tailored to Maori, and limit its roll predominantly to Maori students. This would lead to cutting the size of the institution and reducing government funding.

Wetere set up the wananga in 1983 to encourage the large numbers of Maori who had left school to resume studying. In 2003, more than half of all Maori students participating in tertiary (university-level) education were enrolled at TWOA.

The popularity of TWOA's courses is such that it has become New Zealand's largest tertiary education provider, with 56,000 students enrolled last year, 55 percent of whom were non-Maori. Most courses are free.

One new course with nearly 6,000 students is Greenlight Learning for Life, aimed at improving reading and writing skills for adults. It has come under particular attack because of its origins in and connection to Cuba. The Cuban Ministry of Education has provided teachers to come here to develop the New Zealand version of this internationally-renowned program. This course gained recognition at the Seventh World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, which was hosted by TWOA in November.

Since the tribunal's ruling, the government has backed off its efforts, for now, to change the wananga's charter and reduce its size and has agreed to expand the governing council.

‘La Gaceta’ takes up fight against racism in Cuba

BY MIKE TABER

“Following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, unprecedented efforts were made to eliminate racial discrimination in our country,” begins a special issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, devoted to “Nation, Race, and Culture.”

The journal is a bimonthly published in Havana by the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC).

“Our revolution passed laws against discrimination and opened doors for blacks and mulattos,” said Miguel Barnet, president of the Fernando Ortiz Foundation and one of Cuba’s best-known novelists and writers, at a meeting to launch the new issue in early 2005.

“Despite the efforts of many people over many years in fighting racism and prejudice,” Barnet continued, “this problem has not been solved in the way we all aspire.”

The subject “has generally been treated from the standpoint of fear of provoking divisions” that the imperialist enemy could take advantage of, added Esteban Morales, director emeritus of the University of Havana’s Center for the Study of the United States, speaking at the same meeting. For that reason, “it’s generally been treated with silence.”

This question has been taken up in several special issues of *La Gaceta de Cuba* in recent years. This one, dated January-February 2005, does so from various angles in essays, interviews, reviews, short stories, and poems.

In her article “Are We Or Are We Not” journalist Gisela Arandia writes: “What’s involved is not just legitimizing the achievements attained after 1959, but also laying out how much still needs to be done.”

Impact of Cuban Revolution

One of the first measures taken by the new revolutionary government following the January 1959 victory that dismantled the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista was to ban discrimination against blacks in employment and public facilities. This step was explained to the Cuban people in a speech by Fidel Castro on March 22, 1959.[1]

One of the articles in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, “A Necessary Debate: Race and Cubanness” by Alejandro de la Fuente, discusses the impact of those initial measures.

“It’s difficult to convey the creative potential that flowered at that historic moment,” de la Fuente says. “Beginning in April [1959], a whole number of conferences, roundtables, workshops, and articles in the press analyzed … the persistence of racism in Cuban society, and put forward proposals for its total eradication.

“From one end of the island to the other, cultural, recreational, and political events … were held, with the participation of whites and blacks,” de la Fuente continues. “An unprecedented national campaign was undertaken, with state support. In the process, cultural topics and practices that traditionally were not talked about or were scorned as being primitive cultural forms, were brought out into the open and reevaluated.”

The banning of discrimination in employment and public facilities was taken in conjunction with many other steps that brought growing equality of blacks within Cuba—an agrarian reform that distributed land to those who worked it, an urban reform that slashed rents and utility rates, a massive literacy drive and expansion of education, among others.

The nationalization of the factories and lands held by U.S. and Cuban capitalists in the summer and fall of 1960 capped these measures that struck deeply at the material foundations of racism in capitalist Cuba. The new social relations that emerged, de la Fuente points out, were codified in language, in the use of words such as “compañero,” which remains a universally used form of address in Cuba today.

Persistence of racism

The successes in eliminating legal discrimination and overturning the economic foundations that inevitably recreated inequality led many, including in the revolutionary leadership, to adopt a stance that the problem of racism in Cuba had largely been solved. The remnants of racist prejudice, it was argued, would disappear with the passage of time and the continued advance of the revolution.

But despite the enormous transformation since 1959, racist attitudes and more subtle forms of discrimination were more persistent than many had anticipated.

De la Fuente refers to “a multitude of jokes, sayings, comments, and expressions that continue to denigrate blacks.”

An article by Daisy Rubiera Castillo, “The Time of Memory,” quotes a 94-year-old black woman named Reyita, whose life experiences formed the basis of a book Rubiera wrote. “There are almost no black actors,” Reyita observed in 1992. “And those you see are never the main characters but always maids, stevedores, slaves, whatever. That was understandable at the beginning of the revolution. But now? After all these years?”

One material reason for continued inequality, states Gisela Arandia’s article, is that overcoming the legacy of discrimination requires special measures to advance those affected. “The principle of ‘equal opportunity,’” she writes, does not solve the problem “for groups that for a long time have been at the bottom of the social pyramid.”

This question has been a concern of Cuba’s revolutionary leadership for many years. In a 1986 speech to a congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, Fidel Castro declared, “We can’t leave it to chance to correct historical injustices. To really establish total equality takes more than simply declaring it in law.” Referring to the need to advance the percentage of blacks and women on the Communist Party’s Central Committee, Castro said, “We can’t leave the promotion of women, blacks, and mestizos to chance…. We have to straighten out what history has twisted.”[2]



Henry Wallace

Before 1959, this Havana beach was an exclusive whites-only club. After the Cuban Revolution, it became free and open to everyone.

Special Period

With the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe by 1991, which had previously accounted for 85 percent of Cuba’s foreign trade, the island was brutally thrust back into the world capitalist market from which it had been partially sheltered for more than 25 years. The sudden and unilateral break in trading patterns—the effects of which were intensified by the heightened economic warfare organized by Washington—led to the most severe economic crisis in Cuba since 1959. The measures taken to address these conditions became known as the Special Period.

Some of the policies adopted—such as legalizing circulation and use of the U.S. dollar and the availability of numerous necessities solely in what become known as “dollar stores”—fostered growing inequality between those with access to dollars and those with none.

In his article, de la Fuente assesses this question.

“Although the economic crisis of the 1990s had a negative impact on all Cubans, it was also racially differentiated,” he writes. One reason for this, de la Fuente asserts, was that fewer blacks have access to dollars, since a much higher percentage of Cubans who are white left the island to live abroad. Cubans who are black are less likely to have relatives in the U.S. sending them dollars.

Another source of dollars the last decade and a half in Cuba has been the tourist industry, many of whose employees receive part of their wages, tips, or bonuses in dollars. “But access by blacks and mulattos to this sector of the Cuban economy has been seriously limited since the 1990s,” de la Fuente writes. “This exclusion has been justified on the supposedly neutral grounds that to work in tourism—particularly in those occupations that involve direct contact with tourists—one must have a ‘good presence.’”

It was instances of such discrimination at hotels and tourist facilities that led Cuban leader Raúl Castro to issue a public warning in 2000: “If a single person is not allowed to enter a hotel because of being black, then by law that hotel will be closed down.”

New openings

But the Special Period had another important result: the abrupt decline in credibility of the Stalinist policies that led to the implosion of the Soviet and Eastern European regimes opened up political space for discussion and opposition to Cuban variants of some of those policies. Working-class solutions to problems, as opposed to administrative and bureaucratic actions favoring better-off layers of the population, increasingly stamped the

Continued on page 7

1. A translation of this speech was published in the April 19, 1999, *Militant*.

2. Published as “Renewal or Death” in *New International* no. 6, pp. 334-35.

Washington tries to force Cuban baseball team out of tournament

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—The International Baseball Federation has threatened to withdraw its backing for the “World Baseball Classic” games if Cuba is excluded. In December Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Players Association, the U.S.-based organizers of the games, were informed that the Bush administration would deny their request for a license to include members of Cuba’s Olympic gold medal baseball team in a preliminary round of the games in March in Puerto Rico—a U.S. colony. The U.S. Treasury Department says that compensation Cuban players would receive for the games would violate Washington’s embargo against Cuba.

The Cuban baseball federation responded by stating it would donate proceeds from the games to those displaced from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

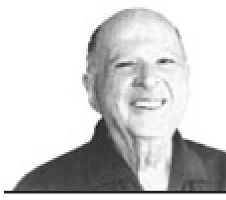
Venezuela’s baseball federation has offered to host the games as an alternative to Puerto Rico, to ensure Cuba’s participation. Puerto Rico’s baseball federation announced its withdrawal from hosting the games to protest the U.S. government’s exclusion of the Cuban players.

International Baseball Federation (IBF) president Aldo Notari, of Italy, said that IBF backing for the games is based on the Olympic charter principles, which prohibit discrimination against a country on grounds of politics, reported the *Toronto Sun*. The IBF’s stance has put the games in doubt as member countries are expected to not participate if Cuba is excluded or face being banned themselves from future IBF-sanctioned competitions.

The games, billed as the first-ever World Baseball Classic, are an 18-day tournament featuring 16 teams of mostly professional players from North and South America, Asia, Europe, Australia, and Africa. They are to be played March 3–20 in Japan, Puerto Rico, and three U.S. states—Arizona, California, and Florida.

MLB officials have expressed disappointment at the U.S. government’s decision and have reapplied for a license to include Cuba in the games, reported the *Miami Herald*. Cuba is the reigning Olympic and World Cup champion in baseball. Cuban baseball teams have won 25 of the 36 World Cup tournaments since the games began in 1938.

—GREAT SOCIETY



Harry Ring

Let's build on this New Year—The recent *Militant* subscription drive had a goal of 1,500. That was quickly achieved and 3,000 subs rolled in. Doesn't this call for an effort to win many to renew their subscriptions and to recruit to the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists?

Isn't socialism a burning need? (No cheap puns)—"South Dakota—Below-zero temperatures and high energy costs are making for tough times on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Natalie Hand, who leads a private foundation that distributes food, clothing and heat assistance, says every night someone sleeps without heat. The Oglala Sioux Tribe says its energy assistance office is stretched to help residents."

Chip chip, Chop chop—"As companies look to control costs, even healthy employers are freezing or terminating their pension plans in a sign the time-honored retirement system is increasingly chipped away."

Eat your dinner on the card—"Hospital bills—but with interest. Now patients who can't pay, or who have high deductibles, can get credit cards specifically for medical care. But the rates can reach 23%."—*Los Angeles Times.*

"Dear Old Golden Rule Days"—In Phoenix, Arizona, a school psychologist and a principal are alleged to have handcuffed a child, eight, and compelled the child to drink medicine before her classmates.

Looking for easy work?—If so, send clippings to: Great Society, Pathfinder Books 4229 S. Central Ave. Los Angeles, CA. 90027. Many thanks.

UK, Sweden events take up Africa, anti-imperialist struggle

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—It was standing room only at Pathfinder Books in London's Brick Lane for a December 3 Militant Labor Forum entitled, "We start with the world and how to transform it." The two speakers, Brian Taylor and Jonathan Silberman, had recently returned from Equatorial Guinea where they had helped staff the Pathfinder stand in the first-ever book fair in that country.

The forum drew participants from Edinburgh, Scotland, and also Paris and Athens. It was a high point of a series of speaking engagements that included stops in Scotland and Stockholm, Sweden.

"What is the image the rulers try to give us of Africa and Africans?" Taylor asked. "Monkeys, lions, and elephants; a suffering people stuck in endless tribal strife; or starving people that need pity and charity. This couldn't be further from reality." On the contrary, "We witnessed the birth of a working class, the only social force that can and will overcome the conditions of exploitation, underdevelopment and national oppression imposed by imperialism."

Discussions at the book fair covered themes like the struggle for national development, against women's oppression, and for trade union rights. "Such discussions," said Silberman, "reveal the explosive contradictions resulting from the development of a 21st century capitalist oil industry at breakneck speed, grafted onto underdevelopment and backwardness," a legacy created by colonial domination and kept alive by imperialism. "Many of the conflicts that dominate the world today find their expression in Central Africa, as can be seen in the imperialist militarization of the Gulf of Guinea," he added. Washington is organizing military bases of a new type there, which the Pentagon refers to as "forward operating sites," in nearby São Tomé and Príncipe, to secure lucrative oil concerns.

From the floor, Yula Okutu, a native of the Congo living in London who is chair of the Humanitarian Action Group, appealed to people to learn more about the Congo and the role of British imperialism and other powers in the exploitation of the people of that country.

Gretchen Miller, who attended a number of the presentations, decided at the London forum to join the Young Socialists. "The real hunger of the young people in Equatorial Guinea for the knowledge contained in Pathfinder books reinforced for me the need to play a bigger role in building the international communist movement," she said. Ten young people came to a "Meet the Young Socialists" gathering at the end of the forum.

Speakers visited classes hosted by lecturers at centers for African studies at Edinburgh and Leeds universities; at the Institute for Development and Policy Management at Manchester University; and at the International College and Kärrtorp High School, two secondary schools in Stockholm. Dozens left their names for further contact with the YS.

Simon Dahlberg, 19, a third-year student at Kärrtorp school in Stockholm, said, "I appreciated the class presentations because they allowed me to see an Africa that doesn't get presented in school books."

Taylor and Silberman were interviewed by Hector Abarca for Radio Nueva América, a Spanish-language station in Stockholm. They also attended a house meeting of six meat workers from Hygrade Foods in south London. Collections to help defray trip costs to Equatorial Guinea yielded $1,500.

Björn Tirsén in Stockholm contributed to this article.

—ON THE PICKET LINE

London: construction workers stage walkouts for better pay

LONDON—Construction workers employed by one of the major firms building a fifth terminal at Heathrow Airport here have staged two one-day walkouts in December over bonus pay. The strikers, employed by the Laing O' Rourke construction company, are members of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), General Municipal Boilermakers Allied Trades Union (GMB) and Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT).

The workers mounted pickets at six sites across the airport. They are demanding a £1 per hour guaranteed bonus, backdated to May 2005, and plan further walkouts January 20 and 23. "When I signed on I was told that we'd get £5 an hour bonus, but we've received no bonus at all for months," said Lee Holland, one of the picketers.



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Construction workers picket at Heathrow Airport, December 2005.

Darren Egan, a steel fixer also on the picket line, said that recent successful union action by steel erectors employed by another airport company, Watson Steel, had given them confidence. Egan reported that Portuguese workers at the site were threatened with being sacked first if they joined the strike action. He described this as part of the company's "divide and rule" policy.

TGWU and GMB senior steward Andy Baldwin said the "strikers are strong and united across nationality."

—Alex Xezonakis

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

January 23, 1981

A dramatic shift in Washington's public stance toward civil liberties and political rights has been exposed in trial preparations for the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance lawsuit against the federal government.

The government is now putting forward the most sweeping claims it has ever made of a legal "right" to spy on, harass, blacklist, and deport those whose political views it disapproves of.

"This is the biggest turn in our case since the fall of 1976, when the government pretended to drop its 'investigation' of the SWP and YSA," said Larry Seigle, the SWP Political Committee member who coordinates the lawsuit.

"We have successfully blown away the smokescreen of phony reforms of the FBI, CIA, INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service], and the rest of the secret police," Seigle said.

"Our party is exposing all the cover-ups. The cover-up that was just Nixon. That it was just J. Edgar Hoover. That the FBI has changed."

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

January 23, 1956

Jan. 18—A. Philip Randolph, a vice-president of the AFL-CIO and president of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, yesterday demanded that President Eisenhower call out federal troops "to liberate the Negro in the South."

"If we can send our Army to Korea for the protection of Koreans 6,000 miles away," he told a luncheon of the Urban League in New York, "the time has come when the President must send some armed forces to protect American citizens in the South."

Randolph was seconded in his demand by Transport Workers Union President Michael J. Quill. "If Federal troops can by used against labor during strikes," said Quill, "they certainly can be used to implement decisions of the Supreme Court." Last December the Pittsburgh Courier, leading Negro newspaper in the country, addressed an open letter to Eisenhower, calling for federal troops to protect Negroes from the white-supremacist terror.

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

January 1, 1931

As the present world crisis grows in scope and intensity, gripping one industry after another furrowing its way to the very core of the complex capitalist structure, a good deal of ideological hardware undergoes a process of rapid corrosion. Not so long ago, "American" rationalization "scientific management" and the "technical revolution" were the inspiration of the entire capitalist world. This wave of enthusiasm undulated from the desperate Right wing of the bourgeoisie, the Fascists, to its most servile Left, the Social Democrats, who pointed to America as the "workers' paradise."

Today when the super-capitalist Arcadia has blown up, with millions of workers pounding the pavements with an unprecedented tie-up in trade and an overloading of warehouses while countless families go unfed, unclothed and unprovided for—a different song is being sung.

W. Virginia mine disaster

Continued from front page

to be found.

To reduce costs, mining companies have been cutting back on the rapid availability of rescue crews. By law, every coal mine in the United States must have at least two mine rescue crews, noted the January 8 *Charleston Gazette.* In 2004, however, only one rescue team for every four underground coal mines nationwide was at hand, according to MSHA. The Sago Mine, like many other small mines, was contracting this operation out.

"We're at the point where enough's enough," Christina Colombo, 31, a middle-school teacher in the mining community of Philippi, West Virginia, told the *Militant*. "Things come down the hardest on the working class. The people who take care of and build our society are not the ones taken care of."

According to Dennis O'Dell, the UMWA administrator for health and safety, the seal that blew out of the abandoned section of the mine where the explosion took place may have been made of plastic foam, reported the January 7 Clarksburg *Exponent-Telegram*. While plastic foam blocks were approved for use in mine seals a few years ago, they are not as effective as concrete blocks. "The material can catch fire, where cement or concrete cannot," O'Dell told the media. "And they can blow out easier."

In 2005 the Sago Mine was cited for 208 federal safety violations, but only 18 of those resulted in parts of the mine being shut down while repairs were made, the *Dominion Post* reported. Twenty roof collapses occurred at the Sago Mine last year. Fines imposed by MSHA for many of these violations range from about $70 to $247 for the most serious ones—pocket change for the coal bosses.

MSHA, which is required by law to inspect underground coal mines at least four times a year, had its budget cut by $4.9 million for 2006, and the agency has eliminated 170 jobs.

Because of a vacation day Sago miner Tom Watson, 56, was not underground at the time of the explosion. In an interview with the January 8 *Charleston Gazette* he commented on ICG's takeover of the mine last year. "When they took over everybody said, 'That's a bad coal mine.' We had water and bad top. And mud up to your knees." Watson, who has worked in coal for 28 years, was a union miner until 1985, around the time the bosses succeeded in eliminating the UMWA from these area mines.

Derek Bragg, 25, is a roof bolter at the Robinson Run mine. He described to *Militant* reporters prior to going in for his shift January 6 his previous experience working at the ICG-owned nonunion Sycamore #2 mine in the area. "Conditions were horrible," he said. "Being in the UMWA is very important. If we see something not safe, the union backs us up. At nonunion mines, I know from experience you do it or lose your job. You have nothing to back you up."

MSHA and the state Office of Miners' Health Safety and Training have begun investigations into the Sago Mine explosion, which is expected to take months. The U.S. Senate will also conduct hearings starting in mid-January. The mine remains closed for now. The Sago Mine explosion is a "travesty because so many violations went on in the mine prior to it and the miners are nonunion. They're actually living on a razor blade," said Richard Fuller, 54, who has worked 35 years in numerous union-organized coal mines and currently does belt maintenance at Robinson Run. "There should be more of us union coal miners standing up and speaking out against these atrocities going on in the coal mines."

Commenting on MSHA's role, Fuller added, "As long as no one is dying they're content to go through the motions. The only time they do something is when someone dies. They should do something before, not after."

Maura DeLuca in Pittsburgh contributed to this article.

Communist League candidate in Canada: 'Free Mohamed Harkat, stop deportations!'



Militant/Michel Dugré

TORONTO—John Steele (seated, center), Communist League candidate for Canada's House of Commons in the Eglinton-Lawrence riding (electoral district) here, demanded the release of Mohamed Harkat. Harkat, an Ottawa man, has been jailed for three years without charges and threatened with deportation to Algeria under a federal "security certificate," alleging he is an al-Qaeda "sleeper agent." Steele was speaking at a January 5 meeting of all candidates in that riding. Federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Joseph Volpe (seated far left), whose department is responsible for deportations, was on the panel as the Liberal Party candidate.

Steele said the Communist League platform for the January 23 federal election states: "Abolish security certificates! Free all prisoners jailed or under house arrest on security certificates. Stop all deportations." None of the other candidates (from left: Volpe; Peter Coy, Conservative Party; Patrick Metzger, Green Party; and Maurganne Mooney, New Democratic Party) took up the matter.

Harkat has appealed to the Supreme Court to lift the security certificate and free him. On December 30 he was denied bail.

—MICHEL DUGRÉ

Stand strong in defense of labor rights

Continued from front page

in support of the United Mine Workers of America and the Co-Op miners."

UFCW Local 400 is one of a growing number of trade union bodies, labor officials, and prominent individuals endorsing the *Militant's* fight to defend itself against a harassment lawsuit by Utah mine bosses and making financial contributions to help defeat the C.W. Mining retaliatory suit.

As part of their anti-union campaign, the owners of the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, have sued the United Mine Workers of America, 16 former Co-Op miners, the *Militant* and Salt Lake City's two daily papers, and other supporters of the miners. C.W. Mining and the company-connected International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU) have accused the defendants of defamation, conspiracy, and interference with the company's economic activity. All defendants have asked the court to dismiss this lawsuit. A hearing in front of Federal Judge Dee Benson is scheduled for January 25 here.

Supporters of the Militant Fighting Fund, which is helping to organize the defense effort for the *Militant* and publicize the related fight of the other defendants, are expanding their efforts to talk to trade union locals, union officers, farm organizations, professors, student groups, and other supporters of labor rights leading up to the hearing. Over the past month $1,000 in contributions has come in from union locals and individual unionists to help the defense effort.

Support from unionists internationally has also helped to strengthen the fight against the Co-Op bosses' lawsuit. Harold Gibbens, president of the Spring Creek Miners branch of the New Zealand Engineering Printing and Manufacturing Union in Greymouth, recently sent a donation of NZ$200 (US$139) with his endorsement for the Militant Fighting Fund. Gibbens and other miners first began reading the *Militant* after the paper covered the union's several-months-long battle in 2005 for a union contract at five Solid Energy mines throughout New Zealand.

Further endorsements and contributions can be sent to the Militant Fighting Fund, P.O. Box 520994, Salt Lake City, UT 84152-0994.

Annalucia Vermunt from Christchurch, New Zealand, contributed to this article.

Join 'Militant' sub renewal effort

Continued from front page

paign coincides with redoubled efforts by partisans of the *Militant* to expand support for defending the paper, along with coal miners in Utah and the United Mine Workers of America, against a harassment lawsuit by Utah mine bosses leading up to a January 25 court hearing on the case (see front-page article).

Starting now also builds on the momentum of sales in the coalfields across the United States. In West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Alabama, southern Illinois, Utah, and Washington State working people in coal mining areas bought 12 subscriptions and 430 copies of the last issue featuring the article "Bosses' profit drive killed coal miners in W. Virginia."

Militant supporters got a good response in coal mining communities in northern West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania last week. They sold 110 papers and three subscriptions.

About 10 readers reached out January 7–8 to working people in Buckhannon, Philippi, Fairmont, and Kingwood, West Virginia, as well as Masontown, Pennsylvania. "The door-to-door response rate on these sales was very high, close to 50 percent," reported Tony Lane, who helped organize the teams. "One union miner who had recently subscribed took a bundle of five papers to get around at work." At Consolidated Coal's Blacksville #2 mine near Morgantown seven miners bought the *Militant*. Workers bought 6 copies at the Shoemaker mine in the West Virginia panhandle, and 11 at two portal sales at the Bailey mine in Greene County, Pennsylvania.

In Birmingham, Alabama, *Militant* supporters met miners originally from West Virginia, including a man whose father worked at the Sago Mine when it was union. "Many people were very positive about supporting struggles to strengthen the unions and for safety at the workplace," reported Maurice Williams. Teams in Alabama sold 123 papers.

Several readers sold the *Militant* door-to-door in the towns of Ashland and Shenandoah in the anthracite coal region of northeast Pennsylvania. In one afternoon on January 7 they sold 33 copies and one subscription. "As soon as you show the paper you realize everyone in these towns knows what's going on in West Virginia," said Ben O'Shaughnessy, a college student in Albany and Young Socialist who joined the effort. Spanish-speaking workers who had just moved to the area were pleased to be introduced to *El Militante*, said Janet Post.

At the Crown #2 mine near Virden, Illinois, four readers sold 22 *Militant*s and one sub. In the Price, Utah, area 142 *Militant*s were sold along with six subscriptions. "Twenty people also came to a January 7 Militant Labor Forum on the West Virginia mine disaster, including eight working miners from nearby coal mines, all of whom took part in the discussion," reported Alyson Kennedy from Price. Supporters of the paper from Seattle sold 8 papers to miners at a surface coal mine in Centralia, Washington, organized by the Operating Engineers, said Cecelia Moriarity.

This kind of response bodes well for convincing many subscribers to renew by February 20, when the renewal drive ends. The aim is to convince at least 500 readers to extend their subs, a goal that will be adjusted when local distributors send quotas they adopt by January 25. Every reader can help by talking to co-workers, fellow students, and family and friends. Or you can be part of teams other distributors nearest you organize at plant gates, workers' neighborhoods and rural communities, campuses, and for phone banking (see directory on page 8).

Join us in helping to increase the long-term readership of this socialist newsweekly published in the interests of working people!

Argiris Malapanis
Editor

How Cuba's support for Angola's liberation struggle began

We reprint below excerpts from an article that appeared in the Oct. 31, 2005, issue of the Cuban daily Granma *under the headline "Operation Carlota is born." This is part of a series of articles and documents the* Militant *has been publishing to mark the 30th anniversary of Cuba's internationalist response to Angola's request for help in defeating the invading armed forces of South Africa's apartheid regime. Translation, subtitles, and material in brackets are by the* Militant.

BY MARÍA JULIA MAYORAL

Our country's support to the revolutionary movements of Black Africa, which were experiencing rapid growth, had begun in 1965, when Che Guevara "saw the need to lend his solidarity to prevent Zaire's recolonization and contribute to the armed struggle of the peoples of the Portuguese colonies. For him this was a starting point for the great final battle: the liberation of the South African people from the ignominious boot of apartheid and the independence of Namibia, occupied by the white racists of Pretoria."

His initial idea was to support that revolutionary upsurge in Zaire, where the rebels—in spite of the assassination of their leader Patrice Lumumba on orders by the former Belgian colonialists—were continuing their armed resistance to overthrow the neocolonial Tshombe-Mobutu government and the white mercenaries recruited and paid for by the United States.

In early 1965, Che also met with the leadership of the MPLA in Congo-Brazzaville. "Out of that historic meeting came another commitment requested by the Angolan patriots: to help that guerrilla movement in its fight against Portuguese colonialism."

That was how Che arrived in Africa in the company of more than 100 internationalists…. During the months they spent in Zaire, they fought in more than 50 engagements under extremely adverse conditions without being defeated by the enemy; however, the absence of a structured patriotic movement with which to collaborate led them to cut short the mission.

Trained with similar rigor, a second column marched to Congo-Brazzaville. This column, called the Patrice Lumumba Battalion, had several missions. It was, first of all, a reserve force for Che's column, and was to join them if necessary and at the appropriate time.

"It also had the task of helping the progressive government of the Congo, threatened with attack by the regime in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa)…. No less important was the mission of participating with a group of Angolan advisor-combatants in the MPLA's Second Front in Cabinda, training Angolan combatants, equipping them, and helping them head toward the interior of Angola, toward the First Front north of Luanda. Comrades [Jorge] Risquet and [Rolando] Kindelán were in charge of this many-sided mission."

A group of six of the battalion's officers and soldiers trained Angolan guerrilla fighters in Cabinda province and fought together with them. In the meantime, other members of the battalion stationed in camps in Congo-Brazzaville organized, prepared, and armed three MPLA columns: the Camilo Cienfuegos (April-July 1966); the Kamy squadron (August-December 1966) and the Ferraz Bomboko unit (1967). Then-captain Rafael Moracén, who played a key role during military actions in Cabinda, was also commanding the instructors who were training the three columns.

This direct collaboration was provided during 1965–67, while the MPLA leadership and the Lumumba Battalion remained in Congo-Brazzaville.

From then on, until 1974, Cuba's solidarity with the Angolan revolutionaries was expressed through their support to the patriotic struggle in important international forums such as the United Nations and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as through training and scholarships to study in our country.

'La Gaceta' on fight against racism in Cuba

Continued from page 4

revolution's course.

This growing space is reflected in the battle against racism, too.

"Paradoxically the Special Period… has created the necessary conditions to break the official silence that has shrouded the existence of racism," de la Fuente concludes. "What's needed now is a serious national debate on the topic, similar to what took place in the spring of 1959."

The Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba has been one of the organizations leading the effort to address this question. As the introduction to *La Gaceta* states, UNEAC's meetings "have been forums where, up to now, the subject has perhaps been debated with the greatest depth."

One such initiative UNEAC took following its Sixth Congress in 1998, where the issue was prominently addressed, was the creation of a working group known as Color Cubano.

Gisela Arandia, who helps lead this group, describes some of Color Cubano's work in her article. "The aim of this project starts from the need to carry out in Cuban society today an intelligent debate on the manifestations of racism," she says.

Color Cubano "has held discussions that range from the role that the media should play in the struggle against racism, up to the need to incorporate racial themes into school textbooks as an important aspect in the classroom.

"Equally, Color Cubano has been participating in community activities" in Havana, "working in neighborhoods most of whose residents are poor blacks and mulattos."

The political stakes in the fight are tied to the advance of the revolution, explains Fernando Martínez Heredia in an article entitled "History and Race." The fight against "the emergence and growth of racism in Cuba today," he argues, "is a form of political struggle against a possible return to capitalism."

Cuban rap music

One of the cultural phenomena in Cuba over the last decade addressed in this issue of *La Gaceta* has been the emergence of rap and hip hop music. The *raperos*, as they are called, consist overwhelmingly of young black Cubans. Many of their songs deal with problems facing blacks in Cuba today.

When Cuban rap began to appear in the early 1990s, reaction to it was often negative, with many seeing it as "music of the enemy," based on its U.S. roots. Some of the initial rap festivals



Advertisement for 2004 Cuban rap festival

and concerts, in fact, were organized outside of official channels, in a semi-underground manner.

This hostility began to change by the mid- and late 1990s, with UNEAC being one of the organizations taking the lead, together with the Ministry of Culture, the Union of Young Communists (UJC), and others. Rap concerts and festivals began to be officially organized, and rap started to be heard on the radio. State support and encouragement was given to rap musicians to pursue their art.

The best-known Cuban rap group is Orishas, whose three members currently spend most of their time in Europe. Hundreds of thousands of their CDs have been sold around the world.

An interview with the three is included in the special issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba*.

"People have always listened to black music in Cuba," states group member Hirám "Ruzzo" Medina. But at the time the group was formed in the mid-1990s, during the most difficult years of the Special Period, he says, "There was distrust, the usual taboos: that we weren't musicians, that we were people of the street saying crude things."

"Orishas are a product of the street," adds Yotuel "Guerrero" Romero. "We didn't invent anything. All we did was detect the influences in the air, and transmit these like an antenna."

Roldán González, the group's third member, states, "We criticize the social situation in this country, in part, but our only intention is to build, to look for solutions, to give the world an entirely positive image of what happens here, … without lying, without exaggerating or hiding reality." But "unfortunately there are still closed minds, people who don't understand what you're saying. To speak of what's happening is not destructive. If they were to read the press, they'd see that we always put the Cuban flag as high up as possible. We love Cuba, and Fidel Castro too."

Commenting on the fact that the group members currently live in Europe, Yotuel Romero says, "Many people have tried to situate the group politically with those criticizing Cuba. True, not everything goes well here, but Europe isn't so great either. I've seen people injecting themselves with heroin in the subways, unemployed people dying in the streets. They criticize socialism all the time, but capitalism ends up devouring you. Cuba has problems, but in the barrios and slums of the United States, the situation is worse."

Comparing Orishas to rap groups in the United States, Hirám Medina states, "The rest of Latin hip hop is too violent, too aggressive, a copy of the commercialism and negativism that exists in the United States." He adds: "These groups are dominated by the market, something that hasn't happened to us."

This special issue of *La Gaceta de Cuba* also includes tributes to black Cuban playwright Eugenio Hernández Espinosa, articles on Santería, sexual stereotypes, and more.

Subscriptions to the Spanish-language *La Gaceta de Cuba* can be purchased at www.pathfinderpress.com. Rates are $40 per year for individuals and $75 for institutions; there is also a special student annual rate of $28. Those interested in following the discussion on these issues will find it worth every penny (see ad on page 4).

The role of women in Cuba's revolutionary army

Below is an excerpt from Marianas In Combat: Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War, *one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. The book is based on interviews with Brigadier General Teté Puebla, the highest-ranking woman in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. The interviews were conducted by Pathfinder president Mary-Alice Waters; editor Luis Madrid; and Martín Koppel, then editor of the Spanish-language magazine* Perspectiva Mundial. *Copyright © 2003 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY TETÉ PUEBLA

KOPPEL: How did the prejudices against women joining the labor force begin to break down?

PUEBLA: In the Sierra Maestra the work of incorporating women into schools and jobs was easier. Because the peasants had seen us with them there from the beginning. It was harder in other places; you have to keep in mind the low cultural level of the peasants before the revolution, the isolation and lack of access to education.

These prejudices were still strong a full decade after the revolution's victory.



Courtesy Teté Puebla

Fidel Castro (center, with cigar) with members of the Mariana Grajales Platoon, September 1958. Left to right: Fidel Vargas, Lola Neia, Edemis Tamayo, Teté Puebla, Isabel Rielo, Celia Sanchez, Lilian Rielo, and Marcelo.

In March 1969, on the order of the commander in chief, I was named director of the Guaicanamar Cattle Plan in Jaruco, in Havana province. He said he was putting me in charge to demonstrate that women could lead as well as men, to show that women could lead an agricultural project, that women could head up any front and carry out any task of the revolution. So Fidel took eight women who were directors of plans—Isabel Rielo among them—to show that women could also lead in agriculture. Part of our job was to get the peasant women there involved in work.

When Fidel took me to the Jaruco zone, the peasants there said they wouldn't work with me. She might be a captain, they said, but she's not working with me. "The commander might have brought you, but I still won't work with women."

But after I'd been there a month, the peasants were working with me. The fact that I worked the same as they did, during the day, the night, Saturdays, Sundays, and so on, gave them confidence, so they understood that I could be a farmer. I had to show that I was their equal, in order to demonstrate that women could do anything.

So women began to join the work in the fields there too. The party, the women's federation, the CDRs, and other organizations all played a role. And we opened over a dozen schools in that zone….

Women in defense

WATERS: You spoke earlier of how the Mariana Grajales Platoon was the forerunner of women's role in defense of the Cuban Revolution. How has this developed over the years?

PUEBLA: Women in Cuba have always been on the front line of the struggle. At Moncada we had Yeye [Haydee Santamaria] and Melba [Hernandez]. With the *Granma* and November 30, we had Celia, Vilma, and many other compañeras. There were many women comrades who were tortured and murdered.

From the beginning there were women in the Revolutionary Armed Forces. First they were simple soldiers, later sergeants. Those of us in the Mariana Grajales Platoon were the first officers. The ones who ended the war with officers' ranks stayed in the armed forces.

Today there's a women's regiment in the Border Guard Battalion at the Guantanamo U.S. naval base in Caimanera, commanded by Lt. Col. Victoria Arrauz Caraballo, who was named by the minister of the armed forces to be second in command of the Border Guard Battalion that guards that territory. There are women in all the military units. They're captains, majors, colonels. Women have also carried out internationalist missions. They went to Angola, to Ethiopia and elsewhere….

WATERS: The example of the women's combat units—the Mariana Grajales Platoon, the Women's Antiaircraft Regiments—exemplify the gains of the Cuban Revolution and the leadership's support for women's equality. In the United States we don't demand women's combat units—we're opposed to anything that strengthens the imperialist armed forces!—but we often point out that the formation of such units at different times in the course of the Cuban Revolution demonstrates what Cuba's socialist revolution has meant for women. In the U.S. armed forces there are no female combat units, and very few women in frontline combat posts.

PUEBLA: Here we won this right in the revolutionary war and then it continued in the tank units, in the artillery, in other units. Today there are military schools at the university level…. Women are present in all of these, both as teachers and as cadets in the various specialties. Women in the military advance to wherever their abilities take them.

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EDITORIALS

Oppose government spying

Top U.S. government officials are campaigning to win greater public acceptance of domestic spying and disruption operations by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the rest of the political police. They want to carry out more freely some of the cop operations that, since the early 1970s, they have largely had to conduct secretly because of the political space working people won through the civil rights battles, struggles for women's rights, and the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam.

Under the impact of those struggles, intertwined with Washington's defeat in Vietnam and the resulting Watergate crisis, some of the government's assaults on constitutional rights were exposed. The U.S. rulers decided to let part of the truth come out in order to contain their political losses and restore the weakened credibility of their cop agencies. That was the meaning of the 1975 Church Committee hearings in the Senate, which focused public attention on the use of snoops, provocateurs, wiretaps, mail surveillance, and "black bag jobs" organized by the FBI and other cop agencies against opponents of government policies. The cops didn't end these operations, but they were forced to conduct them more surreptitiously and accept some limited formal restrictions.

Today, to gain support for loosening these constraints, U.S. officials say they need to conduct wiretapping without even a fig leaf of a warrant because "we're at war against terrorism," and that civil liberties must be "balanced" against "national security." They insist the president has the "inherent authority" to do so. That's the same argument at the heart of the government's defense during an earlier lawsuit by the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance against FBI spying and disruption, actions that were declared unconstitutional in a 1986 court ruling.

What's behind the current moves by the White House? Why do Democratic critics, despite partisan complaints about lack of "oversight," accept the basic argument that "the president needs strong tools" such as secret wiretapping of U.S. residents?

Today, as before, the main targets of the FBI, NSA, and other "homeland security" cops are the unions, Black rights fighters, and other opponents of government policies. The billionaire families that rule the United States through the government and their twin parties—the Democrats and Republicans—know their profit system has entered today a turbulent period of economic depression and wars. They know that in the coming years they must resort to rougher methods against workers and farmers, who will resist the effects of this social crisis. At the same time, they do not face the explosive political conditions of the 1960s and '70s, generated by the Black rights and related struggles, that imposed restraints on their political police operations.

Working people must defend their hard-won political rights today, necessary tools in organizing to protect themselves against the assaults by the employers and their government, cops, and courts. We must oppose all government domestic spying and disruption operations.

Support labor defense case

On January 25 the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 16 of the workers fighting for a union at the Co-Op coal mine, the *Militant*, two Salt Lake City dailies, and others face a federal court hearing on a harassment lawsuit filed by C.W. Mining. This is an important moment to broaden support for labor rights and for defending the *Militant* against this attack.

The purpose of the defamation lawsuit is clear. To intimidate and drain the resources of the union and its supporters. To scare off any paper that dares to quote a worker's side of the story. All this to clear the way for profit-hungry coal bosses to run roughshod over workers fighting for better wages, dignity, and work safety. The recent deaths of coal miners in West Virginia and the bosses' disregard for safety there underscore the urgency of organizing the mines and mobilizing union power to protect safety on the job. The *Militant*'s truthful, "tell it like it is" coverage of the Co-Op miners' unionization battle makes it a special target of the coal bosses in this suit.

Such retaliatory lawsuits are a common tactic used by bosses against the labor movement, often to block workers from organizing a union. Coal giant Massey Energy recently filed, lost, and then refiled a defamation suit against the UMWA, seeking $300 million in alleged damages. Cintas Corp., which owns industrial laundries around the country, is bankrolling a suit against UNITE HERE and the Teamsters on phony charges of harassing laundry workers. Whether or not the companies score a court victory, the legal fees and related expenses can bleed dry a workers organization.

As supporters of the Militant Fighting Fund engage in discussions about these questions with fellow workers and others, they will find opportunities to win new support for this defense effort. Nearly a dozen new endorsements from union locals and officers in the past month affirm this potential. Many endorsers, both new and those who signed on earlier, will be eager to help raise funds to ensure that this attack on labor is defeated.

California laundry workers picket

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than her," said Lorena López, 15, whose grandmother Lucia López is on strike.

Laurie Stalnaker, executive secretary-treasurer of the San Bernadino/Riverside County Central Labor Council, was also on the picket line. "I want to help get out the word to the rest of the labor movement about your struggle," she told the strikers.

The striking workers have visited many other laundries in the area seeking solidarity. "We are asking for the support of other workers," said Sinoe Solís, a machine operator. "We are ready to work, but not without a signed contract."

The company has refused to negotiate with the union since the walkout. A challenge strikers have faced is harassment by provocateurs. Maria Torres, one of the strikers, described an incident where hot coffee was spilled on a picketer. "They want us to get mad and do something they can use against the union, but we haven't fallen for it," she said.

Strikers are also trying to win over temporary workers and a small number of line-crossers that the company has used to maintain some production. Shop steward Debra Crawford said she explains the role of the union in preventing discrimination by the company. "I am the only Black person working here," she said. "The company doesn't want people who speak English. But all they can do is fire me—and I've got a union, so I'll get my job back."

"If I have to be the last one, I'll *still* be on this picket line!" said Lou Pacheco. "In life, you only get what you fight for."

U.S. gov't domestic spying

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sociated with terrorists."

The U.S. government is seeking to defend openly these spying and harassment operations, which the political police have had to conduct more surreptitiously since the early 1970s because of the political space working people won in struggle then.

In a January 3 speech, Vice President Richard Cheney defended the spying program as part of "a home front" in the "war on terror." He said, "If we'd been able to do this before 9/11, we might have been able to pick up two hijackers who flew a jet into the Pentagon."

To counter criticism of the NSA's actions, Cheney said, "I was in Washington in the 1970s, at a time when there was great and legitimate concern about civil liberties and about potential abuses within the executive branch," noting that he had served as White House chief of staff under President Gerald Ford, after the resignation of Richard Nixon following the Watergate scandal. The Bush administration supports "the principles" of civil liberties established in the 1970s, he said, adding: "As we get farther away from September 11th, some in Washington are yielding to the temptation to downplay the ongoing threat to our country."

Cheney said the bipartisan 9/11 Commission's 2004 report "focused on our inability to cover links between terrorists at home and terrorists abroad." The NSA snooping operation "helped address that problem," he said, and as a result "our nation has gone four years and four months without another 9/11."

Cheney also pointed out that Democratic and Republican leaders of Congress have been briefed more than a dozen times on the president's authorization of the spying operations.

"We're at war," Bush declared two days earlier. "If somebody from al Qaeda is calling you, we'd like to know why." He added, "The fact that somebody leaked this program causes great harm to the United States."

Bush was referring to a December 16 article in the *New York Times,* which reported that under a classified 2002 presidential order the NSA has spied on international phone and e-mail communications of hundreds or thousands of people without obtaining a warrant.

In 1978, U.S. Congress adopted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). It established a secret court, located on the top floor of the Justice Department, that issues warrants to federal police agencies—often after the fact—to conduct domestic wiretapping. In the last 27 years, the secret court has declined only five out of 19,000 such requests.

Responding to the charge that the warrantless spying violates the 1978 law, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said December 19 that it was legally based on "the authorization to use force, which was passed by Congress in the days following September 11." He added, "We also believe that the president has the inherent authority under the constitution, as commander-in-chief, to engage in this kind of authority."

The December 16 *Times* article acknowledged that the editors had "delayed publication for a year" after the White House asked them not to publish the article, and that "some information that administration officials argued could be useful to terrorists has been omitted."

On January 1 the *Times* published a column by Byron Calame, the daily's "public reporter," described as "the readers' representative." Calame complained that the newspaper's explanation of the one-year delay "was woefully inadequate," and that the executive editor and publisher had refused to respond to his "28 questions" on the matter.

Cheney's references to the 1970s were calculated. Under the impact of the Black rights and other struggles at the time, Washington's defeat in Vietnam, and the resulting Watergate crisis, some of the government's unconstitutional police actions were exposed. Hearings were held in 1975 by a Senate committee chaired by Sen. Frank Church. They exposed CIA assassination plots abroad and illegal actions at home against critics of government policy—including the use of informers, agents provocateurs, wiretaps, mail openings, "black bag jobs," and the NSA's domestic "watch list."

Such operations, including the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (Cointelpro), were further exposed through a lawsuit the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance filed in 1973 against the FBI, CIA, and other cop agencies because of their decades of harassment and disruption. In 1986 the socialists won a federal court ruling that these actions were unconstitutional. In their lawsuit, the SWP and YSA submitted reports from the Church committee as part of the evidence.

In 1976 the Justice Department issued "guidelines for domestic security investigations." It said the FBI had ended its "investigation" of the SWP after 40 years. "Oversight" measures such as the FISA wiretap court were instituted.

The recent statements by top U.S. officials are part of the campaign to reverse the political gains registered in those measures.